

INQUIRING THE WAY TO ZION

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“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward.”
Jeremiah 50:5

I am going to take these words out of their context and use them, as I believe they may very properly be used, as a description of those whom God is about to save. This is one of the signs and tokens of a coming salvation, “They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward.”

You remember that Zion of old was *the place, above all others, where God manifested Himself*. To ask the way to Zion means, therefore, *to seek after God*, to desire to be reconciled to God, to long to be pardoned and accepted by God.

Zion was also the only place *where the offering of sacrifices was permitted*. Though the disobedient and idolatrous Jews offered sacrifices on the high places which they had profaned by their abominations, they did so contrary to God's commands. The only place where the sacrificial victims could be acceptably offered was in the temple on Mount Zion. To come to Zion, today, means *to come to the one sacrifice which God has provided for the sin of man*, namely, to Jesus Christ, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who is the one propitiation for human sin, and who has, by His death upon the cross, made a full atonement for the guilt of all who believe in Him.

Zion was also, in the olden time, *the appointed place of public worship*, whither the tribes went up on their solemn feast days, to join in the joyous psalms that arose with thundering acclaim from ten thousand voices. There the multitude bowed in solemn prayer and there they heard the Word of the Lord. In a somewhat different form from that which we now observe, yet in a similar spirit to that in which we now meet, they worshipped God. So to ask the way to Zion means *to desire to worship the Most High*, to seek to become true and acceptable servants of the ever-living God.

Zion of old was also *the place of delightful fellowship*. There friends met friends from the farthest ends of the land. He that dwelt at Dan gave the right hand of fellowship to him that dwelt at Beersheba when they came to their great general gatherings at Jerusalem. To ask the way to Zion, then, means *to seek to come to Christian fellowship*, to desire to be united in Christian bonds with brethren and sisters who love each other because they love one common Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, their blessed Savior.

Zion was, besides, *a place of rest*. It was looked upon as the abode of peace. Those who dwelt there were under the special protection of heaven. To desire, therefore, to find the way to Zion is *to desire to find peace*, lasting peace, conscious peace with God, even “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.”

Zion, too, has been regarded *as a picture of heaven*. To desire to know the way to Zion is, therefore, *to desire to know the way to heaven*. To say, “Tell us the way to Zion,” is the same thing as to say, “Tell us how we may reach that blessed state of salvation which shall secure for us a joyful entrance into everlasting bliss.”

There are two things stated in our text concerning the inquirers as to the way to Zion. First, *we have their inquiry* and secondly, *we are told the direction in which their faces were turned*—“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward.”

I. First, then, we HAVE THEIR INQUIRY—“They shall ask the way to Zion.”

Who will do this? We will try to find out who they are who ask the way to Zion. And first, they are evidently *those who are weary of other ways*. They have been treading the way that leads to hell. They have known and walked in the ways of pleasure and folly. They are familiar with the way of worldliness. Many of them have tramped along the miry way of self-righteousness and they have all run in the road of willful wickedness.

Yet they are willing to leave all these ways, for a man cannot go in two opposite directions at the same time. He must go only in one or the other of them, and in asking the way to Zion, it is taken for granted that the truthful inquirer is weary of all other ways.

Is it so with you, my hearer? You are not yet saved, but are you discontent with all that you have ever known as yet? It is a blessed thing when God makes a man discontented with all but HIMSELF—when the way of sin is no longer so smooth and pleasant as it once was, and the enjoyments of the world are no longer so delicious and alluring as they used to be. Surely, if this is your case, my hearer, you are being weaned from the breasts of your vain delights that you may come to your Father who can make you truly blest.

I can only praise God from the depths of my heart if any of you, who are not yet in the way to Zion, have had your way hedged up of late, for it may be that the thorns, which have rent and torn you, have only kept you from going yet further astray from the right road. I hope that even the wretchedness which arises through treading the paths of sin may drive many to find relief from it in the Savior who is Himself the way to God.

Am I addressing any who are in such a condition at this moment? Surely there must be someone here who is saying, “I need to find something real, for I have tried the sham and found it useless. I want to get peace of conscience if I can, for I am distracted by the thought of my guilt. Wealth cannot satisfy me. I have abundance of this world’s goods, yet I am not happy. Worldly ambition cannot satisfy my soul. I have gained the position for which I strove, but I am not content. My mind is driven to and fro as by a whirlwind. I am like a cockle-shell boat at the mercy of the stormy waves, or like the chaff from the threshing floor that is driven before the wind. I have no rest, no peace, no satisfaction.”

Well, my dear hearer, if you are in that state of mind and heart, I earnestly recommend you to ask the way to Zion—for that is the place of rest and contentment—and if you are sincerely asking the way, I am quite sure that it is because you are weary of all other ways.

Those who ask the way to Zion also thereby confess that *they are not yet saved*. It is a great work, a divine work, to bring His people to confess that they are not yet saved, for the most of mankind have the notion that, somehow or other, all is well with them in the sight of God. This is especially the case with those who have been brought up religiously.

If you have, from your childhood, been regular attendants at a place of worship, if you have been kept strictly moral and outwardly religious, it is exceedingly probable that you will slide into the idea—which perhaps you would not express in so many words, but still the idea is there—that you have, after all, very fair prospects with regard to the world to come.

In Jeremiah’s day there were some to whom the Lord said, “Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, are these.” And today the children of godly parents, the people who attend places of worship regularly, and live an outwardly moral life, are very apt to say, “The people of the LORD, the people of the LORD, the people of the LORD are we.”

Perhaps some of you fancy that, because you have been baptized, although you never were converted, or because you have dared to profane the Lord’s table by your presence, although you are quite unfit to be there, you are therefore saved. If that is the case with you, it will be a happy thing for you if you are led to inquire the way to Christ because you feel that you have not accepted Christ as your Savior yet. It will be a mercy for you if you are led to see that your natural condition, instead of making you a citizen of Zion, makes you a citizen of Sodom or of Babylon.

Certainly you cannot become a child of God by birth, by blood, by baptism, or by any ceremonial process—but only by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. If you are not yet saved, I pray that you may be made to know that you are not. It is only God's gracious Spirit who can convict a man, who thought all was well with him, that he is lost. Only the Holy Spirit can prove to him that he is not a Christian, though he thought he was one. And when he is made to realize this, he will probably soon be transformed into that which he now fancies he is—a true child of the living God.

So those who ask the way to Zion are those who are weary of other ways and who feel that they are not yet in the way of salvation, the way of holiness.

Further, to ask the way to Zion proves that *the inquirer is not presumptuous*—that he does not think that he shall get to Zion, blunder on as he may. I believe that many men cherish the erroneous notion that, if they are really sincere, and distinctly and decidedly moral, they will, somehow or other, by hook or by crook, get through the gate of pearl into heaven. They say, "If we do not, who will? If it will not be well with us, then it must be far worse with a great many others who are worse than we are." That is the kind of talk in which many indulge, but it is sheer presumption.

O sirs, believe me that being saved is not child's play. It is not a matter to be dreamed over. No man ever hit this mark by accident. No man's soul was ever saved by mere chance. Many a soul has gone to hell through neglect, but never has even one soul gone to heaven in that way. Remember that solemn unanswered question of the apostle Peter, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

If it is only after stern fighting and struggling—and often a long and wearisome pilgrimage—that the Christian gets into heaven, and if even he is sometimes "saved, yet so as by fire," how shall they escape who neglect so great salvation? If they who serve God most diligently have nothing to glory in, what will be the portion of those who rebel against the Lord, or who simply "neglect" His great salvation?

O sirs, if the best of saints sometimes fear that they will be castaways at last—though that fear is needless if they are the Lord's—what will become of godless Sabbath-breakers, or of you who never read the Bible, and never bow your knees in prayer, but who live as if there were no God, or as if it mattered not whether you served your Maker or abhorred Him? This fatal presumption will never do, and I hope there are some of you who have now done with it forever, who are no longer hoping to stumble into eternal life, but who are asking the way to Zion, knowing that there is but one way and sincerely desiring to find it.

This inquiry, if it be honestly made, also proves that *those who make it are not conceited*. They ask the way to Zion, for they do not think they know everything and they are willing to learn what they do not know. If a child should offer to tell them the way to heaven, they would be glad to hear it. Or though the person who might deliver to them the message of salvation should be clothed in the garb of poverty, and although his language might be incorrect and ungrammatical, yet if he should tell them plainly what they must do to be saved, they would be willing to take the treasure even out of an earthen vessel and to find the priceless jewel in the mire.

But when men boastfully say, "We know all that we need to know, so we have no need of any teacher. As for the Bible, we look upon it as an antiquated, worn-out old Book, and we, men of thought and intelligence, can do without it. Can we not study the rocks, or the starry heavens, or the wide fields of nature? What need have we of a voice from God to guide us?"—we can only reply, "Ah, sirs, your boasting is that of fools!"

You must excuse the harshness of the word, for it is true, for wise men know their ignorance—and only fools boast as you have been doing. May you be emptied of all your pride—turned upside down, as a man turns a dish bottom upwards, and pours out all its contents. And when you find that there is nothing in you, go and ask the way to Zion with true humility! You will never be truly wise till you find out that you are not wise, and you will never really know till you are willing to admit that you know nothing except what God teaches you by His Word, His Spirit, or His servants.

There is another thing about this asking the way to Zion—it *shows anxiety on the part of the inquirers*. Sometimes when one wants to find a certain spot in the intricate streets of London, one stops and asks a policeman or someone else, which is the way to such-and-such a place, and an answer is given with more or less clearness. But having gone in the direction indicated, and not having found the place, one naturally asks again and perhaps again. If you are afraid of missing the spot you want to find, there is seldom anything lost by asking, and it is always better to spend one minute in asking the way than to waste ten minutes in going wrong.

He who is the most anxious to find the right way is the man who will ask the most often—and I trust there are some here who are willing to ask of the Word of God and to ask of God's servants—"Tell me, is this the road to heaven, or am I mistaken? Is this the plan of salvation, by which alone sinners can be delivered from the wrath to come? O sirs, I cannot afford to be mistaken here, for my soul's eternal welfare depends upon it. A mistake here would involve everlasting misery! So, as before the living God, tell me the truth, even though it should hurt my feelings and make me angry, yet be faithful with me, O men of God! I ask you again, and yet again, the way to Zion."

I think, too, dear friends, we may say with regard to this inquiry, that *the man who makes it is not a skeptic*. He would not ask the way to Zion if he did not believe that there is such a place. There are some people who are continually trying to amuse themselves by pretending to be doubters. I speak what I really feel about this matter, for I do not believe in the honesty of nine out of ten of the doubts of which I hear, or of the new ideas that are constantly being brought forth concerning one truth or another.

I am sometimes asked why I do not preach more often against these heresies. What! Am I to tell everybody what any fool likes to say against God? Not I! If anybody else wants to propagate infidelity in that way, let him do it. I shall not blow a trumpet to call attention to the falsehoods that men keep on inventing. If I answered everything that they have said up till now, they would say something else that was false next week. I have better employment than that of blacking the devil's boots in this way.

And besides that, I have the satisfaction of knowing that the most of you are not troubled by these heresies. You know, in your inmost souls, that this Book is true, that there is a God and that, before long, you will have to stand before Him to give an account of the deeds done in the body. If any of you do not believe the Bible, that does not affect the fact that it is true.

And what I have to say to you is to charge you, as you love your never-dying souls, to escape from hell and flee to heaven—to point out to you which is the right road and to beseech you not to miss the overwhelming glory of eternal life for the sake of indulging your foolish and fatal pride. There is a heavenly Zion—ask the way to it, press forward and find it.

I will make only one other remark upon this part of my subject. Those who sincerely ask the way to Zion *are evidently not asking out of mere curiosity*, for if they were, they would ask where Zion is and what sort of a place it is. And they would probably ask some very foolish questions concerning it. Instead of doing so, they simply say, "Show us the way." That is practical—they ask the way to Zion.

I often fear that the questions which are asked by many people concerning various mysterious or difficult doctrines in the Bible are only asked in order to try to lull their consciences to sleep while they are living in rebellion against God. A man says to me, "Can you explain the seven trumpets of the Revelation?" No, but I can blow one in your ear and warn you to escape from the wrath to come.

Another says, "Can you tell me when the end of the world will come?" No, but I can tell you how to be so prepared for it that you need not be afraid if it were to come tonight. I can urge you to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, so that, let the end of the world come when it may, you can await it with holy joy and enter into eternal bliss.

We want more, amongst sinners especially, of practical questions, and not mere captious and curious inquiries. There will be time enough for you to ask all proper and right questions, and to have them answered, when you have sought and found the Savior. But meanwhile, my dear hearer, your immortal soul is in jeopardy, so attend to that first of all.

A man who is sinking in the sea is mad if he says, "I won't lay hold of that rope until I understand all about astronomy." A man in a burning house need not trouble his head about geology—his first business is to get to the fire escape—he can leave his study of geology till tomorrow. So, you unconverted ones should "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and all other things you need shall be added unto you.

This must suffice concerning the sincere inquirers who ask the way to Zion.

II. Now we will consider THE DIRECTION IN WHICH THESE INQUIRER'S FACES ARE TURNED—"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward."

If a man should ask you the way to a certain part of the town which lies toward the North, and his face should be turned toward the South, you would say, "Sir, that place is in the very direction from which you have come. You must turn your face the other way if you mean to get there."

But suppose that he kept on walking in the same way in which he was going before he spoke to you, and suppose that he still asked the way, yet persisted in doing the very opposite to what he should do, you would at once know that he was merely mocking you, and you would very likely pass on and say to yourself, "I will answer the civil inquiry of anyone who really wants directions, but I will not continue to answer the inquiry of a man who asks the way, and when he is told, deliberately turns his face in the opposite direction."

I hope I am addressing many who are saying, "We do want to be saved. We are in real earnest about it. We would do anything in our power to be true Christians and to have our sins forgiven." Shall I tell you how we can know whether your faces are turned in the right direction? *A man who has his face towards Zion is in earnest about divine things.* He used to trifle concerning eternal realities, or to assume the appearance of earnestness on certain occasions.

When he heard an earnest preacher deliver an impressive discourse, he felt his spirit somewhat stirred, but he soon cooled down and was as careless as before. A man who has his face Zionward is constantly in earnest. He feels that the chief business of his life is to get salvation, and I do not believe that a man is in real earnest about eternal life without sooner or later obtaining it. I do not think there will be one lost sinner in hell who will be able to say, "I honestly and earnestly sought the Savior, but I sought Him in vain."

A man may be in earnest and yet, through lack of knowledge, he may miss the mark for a while. But I believe that, sooner or later, the light will come to him. If God continues to cherish the earnest desire within his heart, it will be a sign that He means to ultimately open the prison door and set the bound spirit at liberty. So, earnestness is a good sign of the face being set Zionwards.

Another sign that a man's face is towards Zion is seen when *he hears the Word attentively.* There is great hope for the man who constantly attends the preaching of the Gospel—that is to say, if it be really the Gospel that he hears, and if it be honestly and earnestly preached—and if, while attending the house of prayer, the man does not merely come in and go out as a mere formal worshipper, but anxiously listens and watches to hear whether there is a message that is especially suitable for him.

I know that I have some hearers who seem to go a-fishing in my sermons to see if there is something in it suited to their case that they can catch and appropriate to themselves. Like the little boy who used to listen so attentively that his mother asked him why he did so, and he replied, "I heard a minister say once that if there was a word in the sermon that might be blessed to us, Satan would be pretty sure to try to distract our attention so that we might not hear it. So I want to hear it all and see if there is something that may be useful to me."

I am satisfied that your face is set Zionwards when you can honestly say, "I come to the house of prayer and sit there, not merely because it is the Lord's-day and we must go somewhere to worship Him—not because I like to see the crowded congregation, and to join in the joyous songs of praise, but because I hope that one of these days the minister will be guided by the Holy Spirit to let fall a handful on purpose for me—and that even I may know what it means to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

Perhaps a better sign still is when a man, not only continually hears the Gospel preached, but frequently, and as often as he can, *reads the Word of God with a view of finding something that may meet his case*. In some respects, the preached Word has a very powerful influence over those who hear it, because it comes with a living power from living lips—and God has ordained that by the preaching of His Word men shall believe and be saved.

But in other respects, this divinely-inspired Word is far superior to anything that we can ever say, for it is the infallible Word of God which lives and endures forever. Here is God's own truth in God's own words—and when I find that any of you get up a quarter of an hour earlier in the morning so that you may be able to read a chapter before you go to work, or when I hear that you carry your little pocket Testament with you, so that in your dinner hour you may read a few verses with the prayer—"O God, save my soul while I read this Your Holy Word!"—I feel that if you have not already found Christ, you soon will do so.

At any rate, I am satisfied that you are inquiring the way to Zion and that your face is turned towards heaven. And I do not believe, my dear friend, that you will long be in the habit of attentively reading the Word without finding some precious promise that shall come home to your spirit and bring you into the light.

There is one better sign still and that is this—I am so glad to know that some of you have begun *really to pray*. I expect that most of you used to pray, after a fashion, even when you were children. Your mother taught you to say a little prayer at her knee before she put you to bed, and many of you did not give up that habit until you went away from home.

Perhaps you were apprenticed and possibly there was another apprentice in the room where you slept, and you had not the moral courage to kneel down while he was there. Well, I am sorry if it was so, yet I fear that where you did observe that form, you did not really pray. But now you do truly pray and from your heart you do really speak to God.

It may be that there are others of you who have always used a printed or written form of prayer, yet till lately you never prayed in the true sense of that word. You used to read or recite the words just as the followers of Mohammed repeat their stereotyped form, but your heart was not in them and you were often half asleep even while you were uttering those meaningless words.

But now you cannot help praying—you groan out to God poor broken sentences that you would not like to see in print. I recollect the time when I used to pray after this fashion, "O God, save me! I hear the Gospel preached whenever I can, but it does not bring peace to my heart. I am still without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. O Lord, do save me. Save, me, I beseech You. And save me now!"

If that is the spirit in which you have prayed, never mind what your words may have been—if this has been your desire, your face is set heavenward, and I do not believe that the Lord will long let you cry thus unto Him without sending you a distinct answer of peace. You remember that the Lord said to Ananias, concerning Saul of Tarsus, as one of the evidences of the great change that had been wrought in him, "Behold, he prayeth." And if that can be said also of you, there is good reason to hope concerning you. Surely the Holy Spirit has already been at work within you if you have begun continually to pray and to pour out your heart's supplication in secret before the living God.

Another good sign of sincerity is *when a man begins to forsake his old companions and shows that he likes the people of God far better*. In my early ministry in London, there was a certain friend—if he is not here tonight, he is usefully engaged elsewhere—who came to the service, one Lord's-day evening, with no object beyond a vain curiosity. But that night the Word of the Lord stung him to the quick and made him very angry.

He wrote me a letter, the next morning, to tell me that I had insulted him and I do not know what he was not going to do. He came again to see if I would do the same as before and the Word of the Lord cut him up far worse that time. But it was a very different letter that he wrote to me the next morning. He said that he had been in the habit of meeting, on Sunday nights, with half a dozen friends—most of

whom are members of this church now—and they used to, on Saturday, to draw at the top of a sheet of notepaper a little sketch signifying, “Drop in on Sunday night—pipes and tobacco at seven.”

Then the man went on to tell me that, if these former friends of his would not come with him to the house of prayer, they would be friends of his no longer, for that old mode of spending the Lord’s-day evening would never suit him again. That is one of the sure signs of the working of God’s grace, when a man says to his old companions, “Now, sirs, I cannot be your friend if you are not God’s friends. As far as worldly matters are concerned, I will help you when I can. I will not break my friendship with you in that respect. But as to spending my leisure hours in the places of sin where you find your delights, I cannot do it. I fear I am not yet converted. I am afraid I am not a Christian, but this much I know—I cannot find my pleasure any longer where I used to find it.”

Ah, my friend! When you talk like that, you have your face set heavenward even if you are not actually on the road there. You are certainly in a hopeful condition and I trust that, ere long, there will be something better even than that to be said concerning you. You will go to the houses where the name of Christ is like ointment poured forth, and though you may sit still and hold your tongue, you will be thinking, “I wish I had a share in these precious things and I do delight to hear these people talk about them.”

I know some, who are truly learned men, who have been delighted to listen to a very poor woman as she was talking of the joy of the Lord only a little while before she passed into the spirit-land. It is usually a sure sign that we are in love with the Master when we are in love with His servants and when we find delight in the company of His people. It is surely because there is a secret drawing of our hearts towards Him. It indicates to me, my friend, that your face is set Zionwards when you begin to hate the company of the loose, the frivolous, the wicked—and to choose the company of the earnest, the truthful, the godly, the prayerful, the lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall only detain you while I mention the best sign of all—a sign, dear friends, which I believe is present in many of you—namely, that *you are beginning to repent of sin and beginning, though you hardly dare to think that you are, to believe in Jesus*. Only a few days ago you did really think that you had believed in Jesus, though you are afraid to think so tonight, and you would not like to be deceived about so important a matter.

Yet at times, there is a most blessed brokenness of heart about you. You cannot look back on your past history without feeling that your tears must flow as you mourn that you should ever have lived as you have lived—that you should have had so many privileges and should have slighted them—that you should have had so many warnings and should have despised them.

You do not imagine that this feeling is true repentance, but I believe that a truly repentant soul scarcely ever thinks that it does repent as it ought to do. When a man is most tender in heart, he generally says, “I grieve that I feel so hardened and that I am not as tender as I ought to be.” Remember this—there never was a saint who repented as much as he should have, for repentance should be perfect and no Christian has ever attained to that height.

As for believing in Jesus, I know that there are some of you who—when you have just been reading the very sweet promise in the Scriptures and your heart has been enabled to rest upon it—have had thoughts like these, “I cannot say that I really do believe in Jesus, but I do desire to believe in Him. And one thing I know, if He is not yet mine, I will never be fully at rest with anyone but Himself.

“Other refuge have I none.”

“If I cannot nestle under His blessed wings, I will never try to hide under any others.” You sometimes hope that you really have trusted in Jesus—and I think that you have done so, although your faith is very feeble. Remember, however, that even a feeble faith is a saving faith. Though your faith is no bigger than a mustard seed, so that you can hardly see it, it will bring salvation to you. Even if you

cannot see it, God can. If you do but touch the hem of Christ's garment, virtue will flow out of Him to the saving of your souls.

There are some who go to heaven rejoicing all the way. I hope you may be of that happy number. But there are others, like those who are mentioned in the fourth verse of this very chapter, who go "weeping." There are tears at every step—"going and weeping." Yet, when they get to heaven, they will not be asked whether they came weeping or laughing. It is better to go weeping to heaven than to go laughing to hell. There are some who go weeping to heaven—they seem every day as if they must surely perish on the road, yet they get there at last.

And dear friend, if your face is set Zionward—if you can truly say, "There is none but Jesus for me. He is all my hope and all my trust," rest you content that you also shall get to heaven at last. If you are really trusting in Christ, you are sure of heaven, even if you have but one single grain of living faith in the crucified Savior.

*"The feeblest saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way."*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 32

In this Psalm we have the Gospel of the peace of God as David knew it for himself and wrote it for the benefit of others.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

Hear this inspired declaration, you who have transgressed the law of your God, you who cannot plead a righteousness of your own, you who are conscious that you are sinners in the sight of God—here is a door of hope for you. Here is a possibility of blessing even for those whose lives have been full of sin and transgression. This is not a blessing of the law, but a blessing of the Gospel—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,—*

Even God does not keep it recorded against him. The man has committed iniquity, but it is no longer laid to his charge, even by Him whose all-seeing eye has witnessed it. "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity."

2. *And in whose spirit there is no guile.*

No shuffling, no deceit. He deals honestly with God and with himself, and with his fellows—and God deals righteously with him, and yet covers his sin, forgives his transgression, and imputes not to him his iniquity.

3-4. *When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*

While under a sense of sin, David could not pray. Or his prayer, if he did offer one at all, turned into a kind of roaring, like the cry of a wounded beast. He was so heavy in heart, his whole being was so scorched and parched by the fire of God's righteous anger because of his sin, that the very ducts of his tears refused to supply him with any further streams, and he had to cry, "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

Oh, what a burden sin always brings with it, and what a dreadful thing it is to be crushed under the almighty hand of God when He convinces us of our guilt by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit! When David was in that condition, what did he do in order to get peace with God and to find rest for his soul? Listen—

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

He made to the Lord a full, childlike confession of his sin, iniquity, and transgressions—evidently putting his heart's trust in the mercy of God. And soon, all the burden that oppressed him was removed and the fierce burnings of divine vengeance within his spirit were quenched, and his storm-tossed heart was at rest in his God. "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

6-7. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place;—*

See where alone a sinner can find a safe shelter—in his God. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is the appointed Judge of all mankind, yet it is to Him that we fly for refuge, crying,—

*"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!"*

It is strange that He, from whose lips the storm of wrath against sin comes, is the hiding place of His people. He draws the sword of infinite and infallible justice against all iniquity and then He furnishes, in His own great heart of love, the sheath into which that sword of justice is plunged. So the believer today says to Him in a fuller sense even than David understood the term, "Thou art my hiding place."

7. *You shalt preserve me from trouble: thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

The once heavy heart shall dance for joy. The spirit that was so grievously burdened shall take up the note of glad thanksgiving when the Lord's free sovereign mercy brings forgiveness to His repenting children.

8. *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

A good servant frequently does not need even a word from her mistress to guide her as to some duty to be performed or some fault to be avoided—a look is all that is necessary, just a glance of the eye gives the needful guidance. So the Lord says to His watchful servant, "I will guide thee with mine eye." But like the attentive servant, we must be keenly on the watch for this indication of our Lord's guiding eye.

9. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*

If you will be like a horse or a mule, do not be surprised when you are made to feel the bit and bridle which are appropriate for such creatures, and if a whip and spur are added, remember that you brought such treatment upon yourself. Nay, do not be so foolish, but give heed to the divine injunction—"Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:*

The backsliding child of God will smart under the strokes of his Father's chastising rod, but sterner treatment still will fall to the lot of "the wicked." On another occasion, David wrote, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

10. *But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.*

What a number of blessed ring fences there are around a believer! Just now David wrote, "Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." And now he says of himself or his fellow believer, "He that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about." What more can he need?

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

The Psalm began with blessedness and it ends with holy gladness. It was needful to go down into the Valley of Humiliation for a while, but the Lord brought the psalmist up to the mountaintop again, so that he felt that he must have others join him in his gladsome song—"Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." May all of us be fitted by God's grace to join that singing and shouting company, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.